DOCUMENT RESUME

EL 106 917 EA 007 084

AUTHOR	Porter, John W.
TITLE	The Challenge of Education--Accountability and Local Control.
PUB DATE	Apr 75
NOTE	20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National School Boards Association (35th, Miami Beach, Florida, April 1975)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Board of Education Policy; *Board of Education Role; *Community Control; *Educational Accountability; Educational Assessment; *Educational Objectives; Educational Responsibility; Elementary Secondary Education; Governance; Management Systems; *Performance Based Education; School Community Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	Michigan Educational Accountability Model

ABSTRACT

Many educators react defensively to demands for student assessment, accountability, and so forth. Rather than being defensive, we must turn these challenges to our advantage. If I am responsible in my work, then I ought to also be accountable for my work. We must describe what schools are expected to accomplish and show publicly whether these expectations are being accomplished. An important assignment for any school board member is to understand and be able to hold school personnel accountable for executing the basic functions of elementary and secondary schools, consistent with ever-changing socioeconomic and technological conditions. Essentially, the Michigan Educational Accountability Model is a means whereby school boards, teachers, administrators, students, and parents can predetermine what they want to do at any educational level in any program and how they hope to get there. Although there have been many changes since the day of the "little red school house," the concept of local control of education is still important and should continue to be a cornerstone of public education. (Author/JG)

ED106917

1975 NSBA CONVENTION/MIAMI BEACH, APRIL 19-22, 1975
SPEAKER Porter General Session - ~~CLINIC NO. Saturday~~ PROGRAM p. 10

"THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION - ACCOUNTABILITY AND LOCAL CONTROL"

Prepared and Delivered
by

John W. Porter
State of Michigan
Superintendent of Public Instruction

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

for

National School Board Assoc.
National Convention
Miami Beach, Florida

April 19, 1975

EA 007 084

Distinguished School Board Members, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Your invitation to me to participate in your national convention was an honor, and I am extremely pleased to be here.

Let me begin with a statement about which I feel very deeply. This will be my 22nd. year as an educator. I began as a elementary school custodian and then as a secondary school teacher. During those 22 years I have had the opportunity to see education at all levels, to talk to students, to teachers, to administrators, to board members, to parents and citizens.

I am convinced that there is no more demanding, challenging and, at all times, frustrating task than that of being a local school board member, particularly during times of stress and change.

On behalf of the full-time educators of the country, I would like to take this opportunity to publically commend you and to thank you for accepting and, in most instances, seeking this responsibility and, in my opinion, doing an excellent job.

We are here today attending this conference because of our personal interest in the educational process and upon its impact on our children and youth. Today, more than ever before, our world as we know it is being changed. The greater the acceleration of change in the world, the more urgent it becomes for us to develop efficiency and effectiveness in the way our young people learn. This is true because education is a bridge

between man and his work; between the present and the past and the future; between realizing a full productive and worthwhile life or mere existence.

I would like to do three things this afternoon:

First, I want to talk about the role of schooling in the 20th Century societal setting.

Second, I want to talk about the changing responsibilities and continued functions of schools, and

Third, I want to suggest what local school board members need to know, to ask, and be able to answer to survive current crises and changing demands.

We who are part of the largest adult force in the nation are now, in this last quarter of the 20th Century, educating the fifty-one million children and youth of America and we have done an exceedingly good job, and need not become defensive before our critics, taxpayers, or anyone else. I am disturbed by the tendency of late, of many educators who exhibit defensive behavior because of demands for student assessment, accountability, program budgeting, evaluation, etc., demands which often are instigated by school board members with a business orientation.

Rather than our being threatened and defensive, we must turn these new challenges to our advantage. I welcome an outside evaluation of my performance. As a school board member this is one of the first political realities you have had to accept.

Or let me put it another way. If I am responsible in my work, then I ought to also be accountable for my work. As school board members you are accountable to your community and even more, to your clients, your children and youth. I believe in accountability. Let me explain why.

During the past two years I have had the privilege of being a member of four national commissions: Appointed by President Nixon to the Commission on the Financing of Postsecondary Education, the National Urban League Board of Trustees, the National Commission for the Reform of Secondary Education, and appointment by President Ford to the National Commission on Manpower Policy. In attending the meetings of these four Commissions, it has been necessary to travel all over the country. It has been my experience that there are those who believe that one who advocates accountability systems in education is someone or something other than a humanist....that, in effect, the two concepts in the minds of too many are mutually exclusive.

Of course, I emphatically disagree.

I.

The mission of the schools for the 1970's and 1980's should be what it always has been, namely, to develop in children and youth the ability to become free men and women able to make responsible choices in a society of uncoerced opinion, a free society where you have the right to be unpopular.

A very great many of those we serve, the children, youth and adults who attend our public and private institutions, have become more critical, more skeptical, more uncertain as to the ultimate value and importance of the

traditional schooling process with which they have so long come in contact. This has come about principally because of three phenomenon:

(1) The variance between education and schooling,
(2) Our shifting expectations for schools, and,
(3) The fact that we are attempting to educate all the citizenry.

To meet this challenge, it seems to me that we in education have to become more accountable. We have to first of all tell the people there are some things we cannot do. We have to mean what we say in education and, even more importantly, we have to demonstrate that what we say and do is indeed making a difference in measurable and objective terms for those in the greatest need.

IN OTHER WORDS, WE MUST DESCRIBE WHAT SCHOOLS ARE EXPECTED TO ACCOMPLISH AND WE MUST SHOW PUBLICLY WHETHER THESE EXPECTATIONS ARE BEING ACCOMPLISHED, REGARDLESS OF RACE, GEOGRAPHY OR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS.

This step alone, in my opinion, carries enormous implications for School Board Members in this 4th and final quarter of the 20th Century. This step is being taken in our state amidst great controversy, but its impact is already being felt.

Because of the dramatic implications this approach can have for education, it is necessary, it seems to me, to place in proper perspective what is happening in education today.

I believe that we are in the early stages of a major revolution in public education, principally because of the shift from normative expectations to criterion expectations, and a shift from opportunity to equality. For too long a time has the educational progress of too many children and youth been determined by the "bell shape curve and by textbook expectations." This change in direction to criterion expectations, I believe, is responsive to only the third major development in this country's 200 years of public education.

In my opinion, the first major American educational innovation was the commitment about 200 years ago to make schools a major social institution, thus relieving for the first time the family from assuming that major responsibility for the acculturation process. This commitment lead to what many of us still "revere" the little red school house, and all that came along with it, including local boards of education.

The second major educational innovation, in my opinion, occurred just about 100 years ago, when in 1874, the State Supreme Court in Michigan ruled the right of a local school board to levy taxes to support a high school program. This decision lead to free public high schools across the country and the concepts of textbooks (common) across the land, tests (standardized) and teachers (professionalized), with the ultimate being a normative screening process among students, with an overemphasis on college preparatory.

Within the last half of this Century, I believe the third major innovation occurred. Again, it was the Courts which triggered the change.

Let me share with you when I believe this subtle shift started to take place.

In 1954, the U. S. Supreme Court decision regarding school desegregation was the inexorable force that has led to this third dramatic shift in the educational policies and practices in this country, and not for the reason that most of you might assume.

Most people assume, as I talk with them, that the 1954 decision called for massive desegregation. You and I would both have to agree that the results of the past twenty-one years show that there has not been massive desegregation, and if the 1974 Detroit decision holds there will be less in the future.

The 1954 decision was historic, however, not only because it signaled a move toward desegregation, but because it says in effect and continues to say as a result of the 1974 decision, that there must be a movement away from normative distribution curves and movement toward individual student expectations. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, was in direct response to this emphasis, although probably little understood because it was eleven years in the making.

This interpretation which I place on the two recent Supreme Court decisions has tremendous implications for public education. In effect, it mandates that we address our attention to individual needs rather than to group and/or class needs. It signals the beginning of an emphasis on criterion-referenced testing in conjunction with normative-referenced testing which was in vogue for so long in this country. It naturally follows that the implications for curriculum are also great because:

(1) It separates expectations from textbooks,

(2) It requires measurable performance objectives,

(3) It places emphasis upon student needs applied against specific criteria, and

(4) Above all else it encourages a meeting of the needs of the lower one-fifth.

I don't believe its an accident of time that there is a resurgence of those who have handicapped children wanting equal educational services, or for that matter the push among women to eliminate sexism in the schools.

The mission of education in this fuller sense in this last quarter of the 20th Century means that whatever we do in providing equality of educational opportunity must further the humanistic ideals of liberating the human spirit, of releasing human potential, and of celebrating individual human dignity.

With this, I emphatically agree.

However, for me, the concepts of humanism and my desire for educational improvement are not mutually exclusive, but quite compatible. For if a humanist is one who asserts the dignity and worth of a humane person and that person's capacity for self-realization through the use of reason, then I suggest that most advocates of accountability-based instructional systems of which I profess to be one are indeed humanists. For basic to

the present accountability movement, as I view it, is a new positive philosophy:

--- A philosophy which assumes nearly every student can succeed in the school, and challenges school boards to see that it happens.

--- A philosophy which shifts effectiveness from inputs to outputs, and calls upon school boards to ask the right questions.

--- A philosophy which holds everyone involved accountable for the product as well as the process, beginning with the policymaking school boards and including administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

The role of the school in this last quarter of the 20th Century is to provide its students with training, educative, celebrate and even remorseful experiences in order that they may enjoy and appreciate a fuller adult life.

THE FIRST MOST IMPORTANT ASSIGNMENT OF ANY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER, IN MY OPINION, MUST THEREFORE BE TO REQUIRE SCHOOL PERSONNEL TO MOVE UP TO THIS NEW CHALLENGE BEFORE THE 21ST CENTURY, THEREBY, SETTING IN ADVANCE OF INSTRUCTION SOME ACCEPTABLE GOALS AND REASONABLE OBJECTIVES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED.

II.

Turning to my second point in regard to changing responsibilities and continued functions of schools, let me categorical say that for too long a time, we as educators and school board members have been talking too much among ourselves.

We discuss, concur, criticize, and argue the educational issues, problems and goals on one-wave-length, while the community, legislators, political groups and congressmen have been talking about the same issues, problems and goals, but on a different wave length. It is now time that we who are responsible for what happens in the schools "re-tune," "re-dial" and "re-focus" our transmitters in order to better communicate with those who really influence what we do.

We have to do this, not again because we've done a bad job in the past, but because we have to do a better job now and in the future, because of changing responsibilities which our predecessors did not have to face.

--- Teaching salaries are approaching the tilt button.
--- Enrollments are skidding.
--- Negotiations are getting out of hand.
--- Teacher colleges are over-producing.
--- Taxpayers are squeamish.

--- Students are demanding.

--- Business and industry are questioning our products, and the

--- Economic crisis is challenging our nine-month-a year importance.

At the same time, however, the functions assigned to schools continue to be the five basic functions which have existed for 200 years. They are:

--- custody

--- socialization

--- selection

--- instruction, and

--- placement

What has changed drastically, however, is how we perform these five basic functions. In a political sense we've got to realize that schools cannot be run now like they were run even ten years ago, let alone 25 years ago when television was a luxury, McDonald Hamburgers a dream, Holiday Inn's a hope, and super highways only on the drawing boards.

Within the context of this second point, it is clear to me that the task of a local board member is difficult at best, and impossible if he or she is not quick of foot, and wise in the ways of politics. I think there are some political truths which from district to district are coming home to roost on school board after school board. Let me share these with you in terms of the five functions we must perform:

1. A good school board doesn't allow its high school students to be "controlled all day" in a custodial way while offering only a college prep program.
2. A good school board doesn't confuse "bussing," a socialization function, with improving student basic skill performance and learning.
3. A good school board doesn't allow the staff to select and screen students based upon textbook and college theories, without demanding that any selection process generate performance in quantative and qualitative terms.
4. A good school board doesn't allow its teaching staff to report on instructional process successes without having a mechanism for measuring student learning achievements.
5. A good school board doesn't confuse "career education," a process, with placing an increasing number of youth with employable skills in attractive adult modes.

THEREFORE, THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT ASSIGNMENT ANY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER HAS, IN MY OPINION, IS TO UNDERSTAND AND BE ABLE TO HOLD THE SCHOOL PERSONNEL ACCOUNTABLE FOR EXECUTING THE FIVE BASIC FUNCTIONS OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, CONSISTENT WITH EVERCHANGING SOCIOECONOMICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CONDITIONS.

III.

We, in Michigan, have considered the implications of these first two issues, namely, the role of the school in the last quarter of the 20th Century and the changing responsibilities of its functions and have tried to do something about it. We believe that our educational accountability model can be and has been a powerful force in responding to the challenges which lie ahead. I believe its a powerful tool for local boards of education throughout the land if properly understood.

The Michigan Educational Accountability Model is merely a guide to the school board member in getting an answer to the all important question: How to go about achieving a quality education in a measurable way for most children, youth or adults.

It can answer this question and does when used properly by teachers, administrators, and school boards. It serves as a useful frame of reference, as a logical six-step process for dealing with the basic issue of better providing for the education of all children and youth.

The process is a logical, sequential, and a basic procedure for those of us who are the professionals and for those like yourselves who are the policymakers to document the fact that educational improvement is taking place in our school systems.

1. It begins with the identification of locally determined and adopted common goals for education.

2. It requires the development of locally identified student expectations.
3. It necessitates the assessment of student needs before instruction takes place.
4. It is based upon an analysis of delivery systems in terms of what teachers and principals, along with others, do and don't do.
5. It calls for the evaluation of program effectiveness at the classroom, building, and system levels.
6. It concludes with recommendations for improving classroom, building, and system-wide services to children and youth.

Essentially, the Accountability Model is a means whereby school boards, teachers, administrators, students and parents can predetermine what they want to do at any educational level in any subject field and program, and how they hope to get there.

In my opinion, it also addresses one of the fundamental weaknesses in public education. My observation of public education is that by and large, because of utilization of textbooks that are published for national distribution, the delivery system...or in laymen's terms... "classroom instruction" is very similar throughout the land, and what is "different" are the expectations of students.

This concept is supported by the variations in expectations throughout the country. For example, the expectations for children in

suburban Miami or suburban Michigan are much higher than the expectations for children in inner city Miami or Detroit. However, the schools in those four areas and in almost all districts tend to operate very much alike. What is needed, in my opinion, are schools where expectations are more similar but the delivery systems are much different. This must be if one realizes how much family movement takes place across the country.

I believe we can overcome this weakness by separating out the differing life experiences which schools are expected to provide.

I agree with Leon Lessinger who notes tha. there are three levels of experiences acquired during one's schooling: the training experience, the educative experience, and the celebrative experience. I would add the remoreseful experience, which schools avoid teaching.

Practically speaking, only the training experience can be predetermined and statistically measured.

I mentioned a moment ago the sameness of "classroom instruction" because of nationally developed, standardized test and utilization of nationally produced textbooks. Let me carry that point a bit further...It seems to me that for too long a time our textbook publishers, whether intentionally or otherwise, have been determining curriculum content, curriculum change, andcurriculum renewal. And for too long a time local school board members have been responding to the need for monetary inputs with little or no tangible evidence as to educational outputs.

The board's agenda is filled with input questions and issues such as building plans, teacher contracts, textbook approvals, millage campaigns, award nights, attendance boundary changes, bus routes, and basketball schedules.

There is nothing wrong with such an agenda, and indeed it is basically non-controversial, but I believe people view education, in terms of schooling, as not being any longer a tangible commodity in life, but rather a process to go through in order to better reach and to attain the tangible good things in life. If I am right, then education, or the job of the schools in the future must be perceived and performed much differently than it has performed during the first 200 years of our history.

I firmly believe, for right or wrong, that what the majority of the people want are the tangible things in life. The want good food, good clothing, good shelter, good employment, good health, and enough good leisure time.

If local school boards wish to hold on to the concept of "local control of schools," the formula I have outlined will be of paramount importance.

Unfortunately, school board members have been lulled into believing that controlling the inputs in the last quarter of the 20th Century will maintain local control of schools. This belief is based upon the same principles which brought the "little red school house" into being over 200 years ago, and seems to disregard the thousands of societal changes which have taken place within the past 25 years.

With declining enrollments, inflationary costs, reluctant taxpayers, sophisticated teacher bargaining teams and already 80 percent of school costs tied-up in salaries, common sense suggests it is time to make changes. If you don't believe it is time for a re-focus, ask your local school superintendent when you return home to answer the input questions and then suggest that the following questions be put on the next agenda and decide for yourself.

These are questions that go to the crux of the educational dilemma. Are we making a measurable difference in the educational preparation of our children and youth and are we using our tax funds wisely, efficiently and effectively?

--- If I were a school board member, my first question would not be whether my superintendent and his staff had advanced degrees, but "How many preschoolers have acquired reasonable readiness skills prior to entering kindergarten?"

--- If I were a school board member, my second question would not be how many new buildings are planned for 1980, but "What percent of the primary school children enter later elementary with basic skill attainment?"

--- If I were a school board member, my third question would not be a concern as to whether to spend funds

for closed-circuit television or more audio-visual equipment, but "How many of our elementary children enter junior high or middle schools with adequate training experiences in the cognitive, psycho-motor and affective domains?"

--- If I were a school board member, my fourth question would not be whether we had a 6-3-3, or a 6-2-4 organization, but "What percent of the ninth graders have acquired the minimum general education necessary to select from a variety of career education options at the senior high level?"

--- If I were a school board member, my fifth question would not be, "How many of our high school graduates go on to college?" but "Whether 90 percent of our high school students were equipped with training, educative, and celebrative experiences to function sufficiently well in an adult society, that has lowered its entry requirements by four years?"

These are what I would term "gut" questions. Questions to which you chool board members have to have answers if education is going to compete in the market place with health, welfare, defense, and private enterprise in the years ahead.

In concluding, it seems to me that although there have been many significant changes in American life since the "little red school house," and even though that form of schooling has now all but disappeared, the concept of local control of education is still of importance and should continue to be a vital cornerstone of public education, if only we have the foresight to make the changes necessary to allow school boards to function in the marketplace of the 21st Century and not the 19th.